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CARDIN AMENDMENT TO PROTECT NON-CRIMINAL YOUTHS PASSES SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Washington, DC – The Senate Judiciary Committee, today, passed *The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2008* (S. 3155), which increases federal funding for prevention, intervention and treatment programs for youths. Included in the bill is an amendment authored by **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)** that would protect youth considered status offenders – those who have not committed a criminal offense – and require that they are placed in alternative facilities rather than lock-ups.

Senator Cardin's amendment, which passed by a vote of 11-7, returns to the original intent of the *Juvenile Justice Delinquency & Prevention Act* passed in 1974 and builds on the many improvements that Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) had already incorporated into the reauthorization. The final legislation now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

"The appropriate remedy when a child runs away from home or is truant from school should not be incarceration. We need to show that we understand that these status offenders need support services, not jail," said **Senator Cardin**.

Status offenses are those that apply only to children under the age of 18, such as skipping school, running away or breaking curfew. During the 1980s, a valid court order exception was added to the law but it was never intended as a provision that wholly undermines one of the core requirements of the law.

"Today it is clear that the exception has become the rule, when it comes to locking up these status offenders. This amendment supports the many states that have moved to protect these children in need and gives others the time they need to comply," said **Senator Cardin**.

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